

Six tips to Better Forest Habitat for Fish & Wildlife

Head and shoulders
Photo of DC or
Soil Conservationist
here

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Just as croplands can produce crops yet yield habitat for wildlife, forestlands can be managed to produce wood products and at the same time benefit wildlife.

Managing a forest with wildlife in mind is like shooting at a moving target. As the trees and other plants in a forest grow and change, the structure, size and species of trees and other plants changes. That shift in habitat also means there will be a shift in wildlife species that live in the forest at the time.

For example, the seeds and fruits of shrubs, grasses and forbs in the early successional stage, after a harvest or other major disturbance, are just what songbirds and small mammals want. On the other hand, woodpeckers, wood ducks, bats and other cavity-nesters want the dead snags and den trees of a mature forest.

For the greatest diversity in wildlife, you want a diversity in the size, age and structure of the forest. That can be achieved with selective harvesting of single trees, to always leave a canopy, or by clearcutting small areas of a forest (15 acres or less) at different times, resulting in several successional stages of even-aged stands of trees within the forest. The flush of plant growth in clearcut areas lasts for several years.

Techniques to improve fish and wildlife habitat include:

- 1) Regenerate new growth in open spaces. This may be done by prescribed burning, using herbicides, or planting seedlings.
- 2) Thin stands; remove weak trees.
- 3) Plan carefully to carry out a prescribed burn; studies show most wildlife escape, and the new plant growth afterwards attracts wild turkeys, northern bobwhite quail, and more.
- 4) Maintain forested riparian zones along streams, to allow stream shading and for wood to fall into streams. The leaves, limbs, fruit and insects that fall from streamside forests into the stream build the food supply for fish.
- 5) Leave snags and den trees.
- 6) Follow a plan. A variety of federal, state, and private organizations give both technical and financial help in managing forests for profit and wildlife.

For more information, stop at our office at _____(Number) _____(Street) in _____(city) , or visit the NRCS Wildlife Habitat Management Institute's website at www.whmi.nrcs.usda.gov or the NRCS home web site at www.nrcs.usda.gov



Wild turkeys are among the species that like a mixture of mature forest, edge, and open grassland and cropland near forested areas.

Wildlife Ways

Did you
know....



National forests cover only 19% of forested land in the United States. Non-industrial private landowners own 59% of the forested land; their actions are critically important to birds, bears, ducks, and other wildlife that depend on forestland habitat.